

DHHS Response To Families with Questions About the Third Waiver Amendment March, 2005

On February 22, 2005, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) submitted a waiver amendment to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) requesting approval to implement a revised premium schedule for children receiving MaineCare coverage under the Katie Beckett eligibility option. DHHS initially submitted this request to CMS in April 2004 because the FY05 budget included a provision calling for the implementation of premiums for Katie Beckett families.

Following submission of the April 2004 request, many Katie Beckett families contacted DHHS to oppose implementation of premiums in general and the specific premium amounts. In September 2004, DHHS Commissioner Nicholas met with the parents of several children enrolled in MaineCare under the Katie Beckett eligibility option to discuss their concerns. At that meeting, the Commissioner agreed to look at developing a premium schedule that would include lower premiums at each Federal Poverty Level (FPL), more premium tiers by FPL, and incentives for families with private insurance to keep that insurance. Subsequent to this meeting, Commissioner Nicholas met with the Legislature's Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services to update them regarding the proposed changes to the premium schedule.

The revised premium schedule recently submitted to CMS incorporates the Katie Beckett families' suggestions outlined above to the fullest extent possible, while at the same time fulfilling the Legislative directive to implement premiums as set forth in the budget bill. We are sensitive to the concerns expressed by parents against implementation of any premiums. We have tried to minimize the effect of the premiums to the greatest extent possible but must proceed in accordance with the approved FY 05 budget. We have tried to communicate information on Katie Beckett as much as possible and apologize to the extent that communication may not have been sufficient.

Last week DHHS sent a notice to all Katie Beckett families informing them that we have submitted a request to CMS to implement the revised premium schedule. A copy of the notice is attached. The revised premium schedule proposed in the waiver is printed on the back of the notice.

DHHS plans on holding informational meetings with families to discuss this initiative. On April 7th, DHHS staff will meet with the families who met with the Commissioner in September to discuss plans for the informational meetings. DHHS will send all Katie Beckett families a notice to invite them to attend the meetings once they are scheduled.

If CMS approves the waiver, DHHS must follow the State Administrative Procedures Act for adopting rules. Before implementing premiums, the Act requires DHHS to publish proposed rules, accept comments at a public hearing and in writing, respond to the comments indicating if the comments are accepted or rejected, and publish final rules.

You can visit the DHHS Bureau of Medical Services website at www.maine.gov/bms for Katie Beckett related information. Select “Member/Consumer” and then select “Katie Beckett Information”. We will be updating this site to post the February 2005 waiver and to post a chart that shows the income amounts by FPL. The website should be updated by the end of the first full week of April.